

WATCHMAN WAKETH BUT IN VAIN

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POST-ASSASSINATION FOREIGN POLICY SHIFT

We have heard it said that one of the reasons one may have found inaction on the part of the government, such as failure to place road blocks or cut off transportation from the assassination side, by whatever means, may have been due to the fact that there was a traumatization as a result of the assassination. What is revealing, however, is that the same government which has failed to act for over four years on evidence suggesting a conspiracy, actually swings into amazingly fast action in an area where one might have anticipated a slow feeling of the way. The fact is that after the assassination key foreign policy changes were immediately put into effect.

Even considering the fact that the new President's views on foreign policy differed from those of President Kennedy, on the basis of a natural reaction to the death of Kennedy, one might have expected a slower changeover. After all, President Johnson's area of expertise is not foreign policy, and therefore one might have expected caution in changes that may have come. To the contrary, however, extensive changes were in the works shortly after the assassination. In particular there seems to have been an almost immediate change in orientation to the THIRD WORLD.

There is much reason to believe the Cold War wasd yin gout in Europe, and that the end of it was to a great extent symbolized by the beginning of new relations with Russia evidenced by Kennedy's Test Ban Treaty. Kennedy had already understood the need for a world built on something more firm than is possible in the context of the Cold War. He saw very clearly his chance to end

the Cold War. Drew Pearson, in his Washington Merry-Go-Round column of January 23, 1963 outlined the crossroad at which President Kennedy and humanity had arrived at that critical time:

"President Kennedy today faces his greatest opportunity to negotiate a permanent peace, but because of division inside his own Administration he may miss the boat.

"That is the consensus of friendly diplomats long trained in watching the ebb and flow of world events . . .

"Here are the reasons why Mr. Kennedy is now sitting on top of the diplomatic world when it comes to settling Berlin and other problems of the cold war . . ."

Pearson then outlined the then existing conditions which led the United States and Russia to the "brink of agreement." President Kennedy understood these conditions. In his American University address he set them forth:

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

"Not a PAX AMERICANA enforced on the world by American weapons of war . . . not merely peace for Americans, but peace for all men; not merely peace in our time but peace for all time." (Sorensen, Theodore C., KENNEDY, p. 823, New York, Harper & Row, 1965.)

Sorensen further tells us, "He challenged his listeners to look anew at the Soviet Union and the Cold War, to put past conflicts and prejudices behind them and to concentrate on common interests shared by both powers." (Ibid. p. 824.)

President Eisenhower had eloquently warned us of the military-industrial-complex, and its danger to our liberties. If the Cold War would end, this would jar the power of influential figures in the military-industrial-complex, to the munitions and missile interests and the Pentagon.

"The nature of the Cold War Institutional Machine suggests there is little hope in trying to convert it to other purposes. For the body of ideology and techniques that differentiates the staffs of these institutions is highly specific to a military power-based orientation. That is why the problem is one of dismantling, which means folding up the organization and, at the same time, seeking constructive opportunities for the able men and women engaged in these units." (Melman, Seymour, OUR DEPLETED SOCIETY, p. 236, New York, Delta, 1965)

Yet, in an important sense the end of the Cold War in Europe was an accomplished fact. In their interesting study AFTER 20 YEARS, Barnett and Raskin make the following observations:

"We wrote this book because it appears that for the

first time in many years a confluence of American, Soviet, and European political interests may now make it possible to end the great confrontation between East and West over the future of Europe. A significant shift in the relations of the super powers to Europe and to each other now seems plausible . . ." (p. vii)

and

" . . . economic pressures, such as the anti-Nato campaign of de Gaulle, and technological pressures, such as the growing obsolescence of the bases encircling the Soviet Union, are pushing the United States towards unilateral military disengagement." (p. 89)

1. Barnett, etc. (footnote)

and

"After the Cuban crisis, the Soviets appeared increasingly interested in a DETENTE based on tacit understanding between principal antagonists. They cut the defense budget and, then, production of fissionable material for nuclear weapons in response to similar moves by the United States . . ." (p. 90)

Now, if the Cold War ended in Europe, how could the Cold Warriors adjust? They could go out of business, or discover a new theater in which to enact and reproduce the Cold War—that theater would, of course, be the THIRD WORLD—Asia-Africa-Latin America. There is evidence, however, that when Kennedy thought in terms of ending the Cold War in Europe he had no plans for beginning it in the third world. All available data establish that Kennedy was becoming unhappy about Viet Nam in particular, and from all available evidence it is most unlikely that developments would have taken the course they have had Kennedy lived.

JOHNSON AND FOREIGN POLICY

The most important change following the assassination of President Kennedy occurred precisely in the area of foreign policy, particularly with respect to Asia and Latin America. Of course, to note such a change is not to prove it was a deliberate consequence of the assassination. Yet as a key variable, careful examination of that change becomes necessary, if we wish to understand what is going on. It might be one thing to observe Johnson's orientation to foreign policy is different from Kennedy's, and therefore one could expect such changes. But it is another thing to note at the very moment President Johnson was affirm-

THE MIDLOTHIAN MIRROR

ing continuation of Kennedy's program for peace, and searching for means to end the Cold War, momentous changes were being made which would make peace impossible and renew the Cold War. Here was a pattern of action where we might have expected inaction at least until a longer period of adjustment was realized. This, of course, is not to suggest that President Johnson himself was involved in the assassination. Two observations here are relevant. One is that generally speaking Johnson was more weak in the realm of foreign affairs than in domestic. The second consideration is that his views on foreign policy would still be consistent with the militarists, and his interests would be identified with influential power in the military-industrial-complex. Thus, without implying any guilt of Johnson, it must be realized that if the Cold Warriors wanted to ensure the continuation of the Cold War in a new theater of operation, they could depend upon Johnson, and they could control him where they could not control Kennedy.

William S. White, in *THE PROFESSIONAL: LYNDON B. JOHNSON*, p. 153, Greenwich, Conn. 1964 sets forth Johnson's view on Asia as stated in a memorandum to President Kennedy dated May 23, 1961 following Johnson's visit to the Far East:

"The battle against Communism must be joined in Southeast Asia with strength and determination to achieve

success there—or the United States, inevitably, must surrender the Pacific and take up our defenses on our own shores. Asian Communism is comprised and contained by the maintenance of free nations on the subcontinent. Without this inhibitory influence, the island outposts — Philippines, Japan, Taiwan—have no security and the vast Pacific becomes a Red Sea.

“The struggle is far from lost in Southeast Asia and it is by no means inevitable that it must be lost

“There is no alternative to United States leadership in Southeast Asia.” (pp. 153-154)

Johnson stated in 1961 what our policy has become after Kennedy's assassination.

KENNEDY AND MILITARY TAKE OVER

It may seem irresponsible to conceive of a military plot to eliminate Kennedy, and ensure continuation of the Cold War. However, we must realize that Kennedy was not only becoming more difficult to control, but, in his position of great authority, and from a vantage point at which there was much information unavailable to us, he did not regard a military take-over as implausible. We have an excellent articulation of his feeling on this matter in a discussion with Paul B. Fay, Jr. (10) This colloquy occurred one summer weekend in 1962 on the Honey Fitz, the Kennedy yacht. The President was asked what he thought of the possibility of a military take-over in the United States. The discussion grew out of the book SEVEN DAYS IN MAY by Fletcher Knebel and Charles W. Bailey.

President Kennedy said: "It's possible. It could happen in this country, but the conditions would have to be just right."

The conditions the President outlined were as follows:

(1) The country would be led by a young President,

(2) There would be a Bay of Pigs,

10. Fay, Paul B. Jr., etc. (footnote)

(3) Military criticism of the President would follow,

(4) Then if there was another Bay of Pigs the military would consider over-throwing the elected establishment, and finally,

(5) "Then if there were a third Bay of Pigs, it could happen."

Mr. Fay concluded this episode by describing how the President: "Pausing long enough for all of us to assess the significance of his comment, . . . concluded with an old Navy phrase: 'But it won't happen on my watch.'"

These conditions were approximated in the Kennedy administration. President Kennedy was in fact a young President. There was a Bay of Pigs. The missile crisis which followed, resulted not in the bombing of Cuba—as the military advisors had pressed upon the President (11)—but rather in a detente with Russia. This was followed by a nu-

Test Ban Treaty:

11. & 12. (Footnotes)

"The treaty . . . encountered heavy attack—from . . . former Chiefs of Staff Arleigh Burke, Arthur Radford and Nathan Twining, The Air Force Association, composed of military, former military and defense contractors, came out against it . . ." (13)

The American University Speech—followed by his reexamination of the Vietnamese policy (to be discussed later)—completely fulfilled the conditions set forth by President Kennedy for a takeover to happen on his watch. In fact, President Kennedy was doing his job right, and he very well knew that doing his job right in Cold War America might cost his life.

" . . . when he saw Nixon after the Bay of Pigs he said, 'If I do the right kind of a job, I don't know whether I am going to be here four years from now.' Nor could anyone interest him much in details of personal protection. 'If someone is going to kill me,' he would say, 'they are going to kill me.'" (14)

KENNEDY'S QUEST FOR PEACE DIES WITH HIM

In any event, when President Kennedy was no longer on watch, the quest for peace was crushed. D. F. Flemming, the distinguished scholar on the Cold War, described this critical peace-making phase of President Kennedy's administration and the abrupt end which was the consequence of his assassination:

"Fortunately, we had in President Kennedy at a new turning point in history a leader with both vision and courage. He had made certain that there were no missile gaps against us. He had won the acclaim of the West by the way he successfully played showdown nuclear politics in the 1962 Cuban missile crisis. He had faced the last of man's ultimate decisions on earth.

"Then, in the summer of 1963, Kennedy turned his face resolutely toward life and unmistakably signaled the

13. & 14 (footnotes)

end of the Cold War. Behind the patriotic facade of nuclear militarism he saw the death of his own children and of all children. In a series of magnificent addresses, he urged us to reconsider our attitudes toward peace, the Soviet Union, and the Cold War. He won a treaty ending atomic testing above ground and then paused to wait a little for the more embattled of his cold-war compatriots to catch up with the times.

"At that moment he was struck down . . .

"Is this to happen again, for the third and last time? Are we really about to plunge into another twenty years of escalating peril of the final world war in a self-defeating effort to control the fringes of China militarily? Should we not rather join in welcoming the great Chinese people belatedly into the twentieth century? And, above all, can we move fast enough really to organize the unity of mankind while there is still time?" (15)

In seeking to keep the path of peace open, President Kennedy had reminded us of the ancient Chinese proverb, that a journey of a thousand miles must begin with a single step. President Kennedy took that little single step, particularly with the Test Ban Treaty, symbolizing the failure of the Cold War in Europe, but then he was shot dead.